

▼ CHAPTER 2

THE DISTRICT AND ITS DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER

TWO TYPES OF DISTRICTS

A district is part of an area, one of the 93 areas that make up the U.S./Canada General Service Conference. Below are the two types of districts in general service.

Geographic District

This is the most common type of district. The number of groups in a district is usually determined by how many groups a district committee member, or DCM, can reasonably be expected to keep in touch with, learn their problems, and find ways to contribute to their growth. District boundaries may be redrawn should the number of groups increase or decrease significantly. (For more information see Appendix F, Redistricting.)

Linguistic District

To encourage participation of the maximum number of groups, some areas have incorporated linguistic districts within their structure. These districts are made up of groups that conduct meetings in languages including French, Spanish, Polish, Vietnamese and American Sign Language. They usually have a bilingual DCM or liaison. Their boundaries may be independent of the conventional geographic district boundaries.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DCM

The district committee member, or DCM, plays a vital role in general service. While the GSR is the voice of a *group*, the DCM is the voice of a *district*. A district needs a leader. The GSRs will look to the DCM for guidance on being GSRs and serving their groups. They will look to the DCM to lead on forming an agenda for district activities. They'll want to be inspired and encouraged, but not told what to do.

A DCM who can set their own opinions aside in favor of listening and supporting the district's GSRs and of understanding and advancing the conscience of the district's groups is practicing two important principles of leadership in A.A.: leading by example and serving with humility.

The DCM learns the thoughts, wishes and needs of the district's groups in different ways. Many districts set aside time in their meetings for GSRs to give reports on what's happening in their groups. This gives the DCM the opportunity to listen, to ask questions and to make suggestions (and to follow up to see if the suggestions helped).

The DCM also learns by visiting and communicating directly with the groups. Here, the DCM is serving as a resource — and not as a replacement for a GSR. In a group without a GSR, the DCM may be able to open a line of communication. Sometimes this stimulates interest within the group to want a GSR of their own.

What the DCM learns will eventually form the conscience of the district. As a member of the area committee, at area assemblies the DCM has the opportunity to express the district's conscience in more than one way:

- By asking questions and making suggestions on area business and proposing new ideas, perhaps for a new way to carry our message of recovery or a potential revision to a piece of A.A. literature.

- By conveying the district’s conscience to the delegate on issues coming before the annual General Service Conference, the DCM can help to make the district’s conscience part of the delegate’s thinking.
- By voting on the area’s trusted servants, including the delegate position, and the area’s activities and budgets.

MEMBERS OF A DISTRICT COMMITTEE

A district committee is typically composed of the:

- Current GSRs from groups within a district
- The DCM elected by the district’s GSRs
- The alternate DCM elected by the district’s GSRs

Each GSR has a vote on district matters and in district elections. Depending on the district, the DCM and the alternate DCM may or may not be able to vote.

Some districts form standing or ad hoc committees to address specific tasks. (See Glossary for a definition of “ad hoc committee.”) Depending on the district and the type of the committee, the committee chairs may be elected by the district or be appointed by the DCM. Group conscience determines who may or may not be able to vote.

Many districts establish additional positions to serve on the district committee. These include:

- District treasurer
- District secretary
- Committee chairs

Depending on the district, current GSRs may be eligible to serve in these positions. This GSR would still have *one* vote.

Some districts suggest that these additional positions go to past GSRs or experienced group members from within the district. Depending on the district, they may or may not be able to vote.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR DCM

Experience of the Fellowship suggests that a DCM ought to:

- Have served as a GSR
- Have at least four or five years of sobriety
- Be familiar with both the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts
- Have the time and energy to serve the district well
- Be able to lead a district while respecting the conscience of the district
- Have an email address or other easy way of maintaining contact with GSRs and other members
- Be familiar with the G.S.O. and area websites

Each district decides how to weigh these considerations when voting for DCM and alternate DCM.

TERM OF OFFICE

DCMs serve a term of two years. Alternate DCMs also serve two years. In many areas DCM terms coincide with those of the “panel” covering the area delegate’s term of service. (See Glossary for a definition of “Panel.”)

▶ DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Every district is different, but the following are relatively common service activities undertaken by DCMs:

- 1.** Regularly hold district meetings. DCMs are asked to give reports to the GSRs on news, issues, proposals and future events from the area and G.S.O. It is also important for DCMs to keep the GSRs informed about Conference activities, perhaps even assisting the delegate in reporting the proceedings of the General Service Conference, either by organizing report-backs or delivering the reports to their districts in lieu of the delegate. GSRs are typically asked to report on what’s happening in their groups, and DCMs can make sure that GSRs have what they need in order to assure good communication across the service structure. (See the section titled “Making Reports” in Chapter 1 for a list of publications that can be helpful to DCMs in making reports to the district.)
- 2.** Regularly attend area assemblies. The number of assemblies during the year varies by area. All DCMs (and GSRs) from around the area are asked to attend. DCMs (and GSRs) are voting members of these assemblies. (See Chapter 3 for more information on the area and assemblies.)
- 3.** Reach out to groups in the district that do not have GSRs. Some groups may have little or no history of electing GSRs. Some may have had active GSRs in the past, but no longer. The DCM is asked to open a line of communication with these groups. The purpose is not to badger them into electing GSRs, but to begin to connect them to A.A. as a whole.
- 4.** Organize workshops and/or sharing sessions on service activities.
- 5.** Bring Traditions problems to the attention of the delegate.
- 6.** Help GSRs become acquainted with *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*. DCMs can also be helpful by introducing the GSRs to *Box 4-5-9* and service material from G.S.O., which includes workbooks and guidelines on an array of topics.
- 7.** Alert the district’s GSRs to new literature, service materials and technology applications from G.S.O. and Grapevine. This includes new books published by A.A. World Services and the Grapevine. The literature catalogs of the two corporations are an excellent resource. DCMs often hear about new literature before it appears in the catalog, and it can be helpful to alert GSRs on what’s coming. The groups may have questions and comments on these. The DCM can help the GSRs address these while also passing them along to the area and the delegate.
- 8.** Assist the delegate in obtaining group contact information for A.A. Regional Directories. These directories are used for A.A. purposes only. They include information on individual groups by city within each province or territory, with contact information on group contacts.
- 9.** In many areas, DCMs attend area committee meetings in addition to area assemblies. The purpose and scheduling of these meetings varies by area. (For more information, see Chapter 4 of this manual on the area committee.)

TO THE NEWLY ELECTED DCM

The rotating DCM typically briefs you, the incoming DCM, before the new term begins. Outgoing DCMs usually welcome being of help. If, however, some of your questions have not been answered, the area is a good resource.

Experience in the Fellowship suggests that new DCMs take time before and early in their terms to review this Service Manual, including the Twelve Concepts for World Service. A review of the Twelve Traditions is also helpful. (See the section titled “To the Newly Elected GSR” in Chapter 1 for a list of other A.A. publications that have been found to be helpful to the DCM as well.)

Preparing for the first district meeting is typically a top priority for a new DCM, who can set the agenda for this meeting as they see fit. Let the purpose of the district – to serve the district’s groups and convey their conscience to the area – be your guide.

Experience in the Fellowship suggests that involving the district’s GSRs in the first meeting as much as possible helps set the right tone. Typically, the GSRs who are continuing on will already have a good sense of their jobs and what’s expected of them. They will certainly want to hear about what service events are coming up that they are expected to attend, especially the next assembly.

Newly elected GSRs will likely have little or no experience in general service and may or may not have had predecessors to help prepare them. Being able to talk about their groups and ask questions about their position can go a long way in easing their entry into their roles.

THE SERVICE SPONSOR

Experience in the Fellowship suggests that a service sponsor is highly recommended to those newly elected DCMs who do not already have one. (See the section “The Service Sponsor” in Chapter 1 for more information.)

TRAVEL EXPENSES

Sometimes DCMs incur expenses traveling to and from service events. Weekend events may also involve expenses for accommodations and food. Budgeting for expenses is a discussion a DCM ought to have with the district at the beginning of the term and certainly before incurring any expense. It is up to each district to decide whether it will reimburse its DCM for all or part of their travel expenses, but it should be remembered that an individual’s finances should not be a barrier to service.

THE ALTERNATE DCM

The alternate DCM serves as a backup for the DCM. If the DCM is unable to attend a district meeting or area assembly, the alternate DCM can step in. The alternate can chair the district meeting and vote on behalf of the district at an area assembly or area committee meeting. If the DCM resigns or is unable to serve for any reason, the alternate often steps in. How this is handled is up to the GSRs in the district.

FAQs

- 1. If I, as DCM, can't make it to the next area assembly, can I send someone in my place?**
Only the elected DCM or alternate DCM (when the DCM is absent) may vote in an area meeting. Generally speaking, if the area needs a quorum of DCMs to conduct business, only elected DCMs (and elected alternate DCMs if their principals aren't present) count toward the requirements of the quorum.
- 2. Do I really need to have a service sponsor?** The scope of the DCM position and the ongoing need to apply the Traditions and Concepts to a variety of situations makes having a service sponsor a benefit.
- 3. If a group in the district says it wants A.A. to revise an existing piece of A.A. literature or create a new piece, is there a way for the district to help bring this to A.A.'s attention?** Yes. If as DCM you are uncertain about the process, you might reach out to the area chair or delegate. Your service sponsor may be a good resource as well. (For additional information on how an item becomes an agenda item for the General Service Conference, see Appendix U.)
- 4. If no one seems interested in taking over as DCM when my term ends, should I continue on until someone is found or perhaps even serve another two-year term?** It can be difficult when we have worked hard, love this service position and see no one interested in taking over. Nevertheless, the Traditions and the Concepts encourage rotation of service. When our terms are up, we step aside. Instead of continuing past the end of your term, consider offering your services for a different position in general service. Your interest and commitment is needed and appreciated. (See Appendix E for more discussion on the principle of rotation.)
- 5. Our district keeps growing and I find it hard to serve all of the groups effectively. What can we do?** (See Appendix F, Redistricting.)

NOTES:
